DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 235 126 SP 023 023

AUTHOR Polidoro, J. Richard
TITLE Rebalancing the University: Will Physical Education Survive?
PUB DATE Mar 83
NOTE 13p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Change Strategies; Cost Effectiveness; *Departments; Health Education; Higher Education; Long Range Planning; Needs Assessment; *Physical Education; Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Recreation; *Reduction in Force; Resource Allocation; *Retrenchment
IDENTIFIERS *University of Rhode Island

ABSTRACT

Targeted as an area of low priority and faced with proposed major reductions in both program and staff, the Department of Physical Education, Health and Recreation at the University of Rhode Island has been involved in an on-going fight for survival. In response to these attitudes, the Department first presented, to the University administration, a report of departmental functions pertinent to the stated mission of the University. Major emphasis was placed on the role health and physical education plays in meeting the health promotion and disease prevention needs of society. Focus was also placed on increasing health care costs and the need to provide increased support for health promotion. The Department asserted its unique role in delivering human services to the community, and its subsequent centrality to the University's stated mission. Data regarding application and admission patterns over the past 10 years indicated slightly increasing enrollments and a current full time faculty/student ratio of 1:130. Data from a variety of sources illustrated the quality of existing programs. Comparison with other regional institutions demonstrated the uniqueness of programs in the Department. Further exploration revealed that the program was cost effective, and that the University had a large financial commitment in the program. This paper reports upon the Department's continuing efforts to survive, and suggestions are made for action by university departments experiencing similar threats to their survival. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED235126

REBALANCING THE UNIVERSITY: WILL PHYSICAL EDUCATION SURVIVE?

J. Richard Polidoro
University of Rhode Island

Our institutions of higher education are in deep trouble. All across the country, severe fiscal problems have led many of our nations' colleges and universities to undertake a variety of changes ranging from program reduction to retrenchment of faculty.[1,2,3,4,5] In some instances, university deficits have led to the complete elimination of entire programs. The University of Washington, for example, recently announced plans to eliminate twenty-four degree programs over the next three years.[6]

Faced with severe fiscal restraints, Presidents at many state universities are being hard pressed to maintain traditional diversity while preserving the quality of programs in existence. In many of our public state institutions, the shortfalls in tuition revenues, the erosion of state and federal support, the reduction in student enrollments, and shifts in student interests have led to increases in tuition revenues and to the development of both short and long range rebalancing plans.[7,8] These rebalancing plans represent attempts to reallocate financial resources by reducing the scope of some programs as seen less basic to the mission of the University in order to increase the quality and effectiveness of others. In most documented instances, the proposed rebalancing plans have led to a reordering of University priorities and the subsequent disintegration of programs in the traditional service delivery areas (people oriented). On the other hand, increased support has been focused on programs associated with high technology (eg. Computer Science, Engineering, and Business).[9,10] Needless to say, traditional university programs in physical education, health, recreation and dance along with programs in nutrition, education, music, theater, and drama have appeared on many institutional rebalancing "hit lists".

SP 023 023

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J. Richard Polidoro
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Targeted as an area of low priority and faced with proposed major reductions in both program and staff, the Department of Physical Education, Health and Recreation at the University of Rhode Island has been involved in an ongoing fight for survival for the past twelve months. At this point in time, it appears that the Department will remain a viable entity and may even be emerging as a department with considerably more quality and ultimate prestige. The purpose of this paper is to review the events which have occurred within the past year and to highlight major steps taken by the Department in response to the proposed reduction.

In December of 1981, the President of the University of Rhode Island announced a three year plan which called for a rebalancing of the University resources with a reduction in support for a variety of university programs primarily associated with the College of Human Science and Services.[8] Among several reductions encompassing a variety of programs, included in the plan was a targeted reduction of twelve full time faculty members (a reduction of 60%) in the Department of Physical Education, Health and Recreation. If implemented the plan would have gutted a major portion of the undergraduate professional program and all of the basic service program. Only a small graduate program would remain. In addition to the proposed cuts, the rebalancing plan, (developed by the President, four vice-presidents and three deans at the University) also contained provisions for the r allocation of funds and resources into such areas as computer science, engineering and business. The plan also contained provisions for investments to be made in other programs associated with advanced technology across the campus.

Faced with severe reductions and potential elimination, the Department of Physical Education, Health and Recreation undertook a massive three pronged response to maintain its place on campus. Central to the Department's response was a carefully thought out plan which attempted to: 1) document in clear and concise form, the relative importance of the activities of the Department;

2) call attention to the campus and to the general community, the nature of the problem by forcing a dramatic confrontation with the University administration; and 3) put the Department on the offense by developing a long range program and staffing plan which encompassed a positive view toward change.

The Written Response

The initial response to the rebalancing plan by the Department was to present in clear and concise form, materials relating specifically to departmental activity. This report presented information pertinent to nine major criteria identified by the University as central to the rebalancing decisions. These criteria, perhaps appropriately labeled "survival criteria," requested that the Department analyze its role in relationship to 1) the broader needs of society; 2) the needs of the state and the region; 3) the centrality of the Department to the mission of the University; 4) the needs and demands of the students; 5) the quality of existing programs; 6) the availability of programs elsewhere; 7) the critical mass of the Department; 8) the cost of programs in relation to revenues generated by the programs; and 9) the status of resources required for program continuation. Each of these nine criteria were thoroughly analyzed by the Department and detailed in a report presented to the University administration. When presented, this initial response served as a solid starting point for negotiation and further discussion.

In developing its written response, valuable sources of data were obtained which strengthened the Department's critial analyses. Particularly valuable sources of data support utilized within each of the criteria included the following:

Broader Needs of Society

Materials utilized in responding to this criteria were those which emphasized the importance of health, fitness and exercise to national public health

policy. Particularly important documents were two recent national United States Public Health Service publications: Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention;[11] and Promoting Health/Preventing Disease: Objectives for the Nation.[12] Materials from the Presidents' Council of Physical Fitness and Sport were equally cited. As evident from the above sources, the major departmental thrust emphasized the role that health and physical education must play in meeting the health promotion and disease prevention needs of society.

Needs of the State and Region

In responding to this criteria, a variety of state documents were cited to illustrate both programmatic and manpower needs within the state of Rhode Island. Emphasis was placed upon these needs as they relate to increasing health care costs and life style, highlighting the need to provide increased support for health promotion rather than health care. Materials supplied by the Rhode Island State Department of Health (RI State Health Systems Plan, 1980[13]), the American Health Association, the State Department of Education, and the Governor's Commission on Manpower Needs were used to illustrate the need for health and physical educators in both public and private settings. Particular stress was placed upon the needs of workers in industrial and commercial settings.

Centrality of the Department to the Mission of the University

This was perhaps the most difficult and controversial of each of the evaluative criteria to deal with as value judgements among the Department and University administration varied considerably. Since the University of Rhode Island has traditionally been a land grant institution, considerable emphasis was placed upon the traditional role of the university as the state's primary public comprehensive university. A major mission of the University of Rhode Island has always been diversity and service delivery to the community.

The proposed reallocation plan would have significantly altered this mission. Through utilization of documents from the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education and University mission statements, the Department asserted its unique role in delivering human services to the community, hence its subsequent centrality to the stated mission of the university.

Needs and Demands of Students

Data supplied by the Registrar's office provided information relating to student enrollments and credit hours generated by faculty. Data were also supplied by the University admissions office regarding application and admission patterns over the previous ten years. Although the data clearly indicated that since 1978, the department has experienced a decline in undergraduate majors, overall enrollments have stabilized and appear to be slightly increasing. Particularly impressive was the reporting of the current F.T.E. faculty/student ratio of 1:130. Further impressive was the presentation of data which illustrated a significant increase in credit hours generated among full time faculty.

Quality of Programs

Data from a variety of sources were used to illustrate the quality of existing programs. Particularly helpful were reports and commendations from external consultants, accreditation teams, and letters from individuals and groups familiar with departmental activities. Other data cited included results obtained from student/faculty evaluations (SET's), and data relative to faculty scholarships, presentations and honors.

Availability Elsewhere

Data were gathered pertinent to the availability of similar programs throughout the state and regions. Comparison with neighboring regional institutions were made to illustrate the uniqueness of programs in Health, Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Rhode Island. This was done on a program by program basis with both regional land grant and pri-

vate institutions. Arguments were made to illustrate the unique program options currently at the University and how these options are meeting the needs of the students and the community throughout the New England area.

Critical Mass of the Department

Data supplied by the Office of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs were used to provide information relative to 1) full and part time faculty; 2) staff; 3) clinical affiliates; 4) graduate assistantships; and 5) students. This data highlighted the scope and diversity of departmental activity by illustrating the large number of people who would be affected by major program curtailment.

Cost Efficiency

Data supplied from the office of the Vice President for Business and Finance and the Registrar's office were used to illustrate the cost efficiency of the Department in comparison of other programs on campus. Drawing from such factors as credit hours generated, tuition revenues generated, per credit hour costs, revenues generated from overhead accounts, and from general revenue support reflected in operating and personnel budgets, a cost efficiency percentage was calculated. The cost efficiency percentage is an indication of the amount of revenues theoretically returned to the University to offset programs costs. A cost efficiency percentage may be calculated by first subtracting all revenues generated by a program (tuition and overhead) from the gross general revenue support the program receives. This will provide a net cost amount to the University. By then dividing the net cost by the gross general revenue support, a percentage of university cost to the total program cost may be obtained.

To illustrate: during the 1981-82 academic year, the total Gross General Revenue Support (personnel and operating budgets) allocated to the Department of Physical Education, Health and Recreation from state revenue amounted to $673,512. Through tuition and research grant overhead accounts, the Department recovered $438,168 on tuition revenues and $11,880 in overhead revenue (a total

of $450,048). (Tuition revenues were calculated at the rate of $44 per credit hour (undergraduates) and $68 per credit hour (graduates). These figures were then multiplied by the total student credit hours generated for the year (9,334 undergraduate and 404 graduate). By subtracting the total revenues generated from Revenue Support, we obtained a Net Program Cost to the University ($223,464). By dividing the Net Program Cost to the University by the General Revenue Support, one obtains a percentage figure which reflects a percentage of support not covered by either tuition or overhead. In this illustration, the net % cost to the University for maintaining the Department amounted to 33 percent. Stated differently, two-thirds (67%) of the Departmental cost were returned to the University.

When compared with other programs on campus, the percentage of total cost returned by the Department of Physical Education, Health and Recreation was considerably higher than most of the other programs.

Resources Involved

Data were provided to illustrate the major investment the University had already committed to the Department. An inventory of existing facilities, equipment and supplies served to highlight the tremendous investment already made in the form of swimming pools, gymnasia, classrooms, instructional hard and soft ware, laboratory and research equipment. Particular attention was paid to a recent capital allocation made to the Department in 1979 for the purchase of sophisticated cardiopulmonary equipment.

Presentation of this data assisted in highlighting the ramifications of program curtailment upon the diversity of resources already in existence.

The Confrontation

The written response to the survival criteria served as a starting point for review and discussion. Meetings were held and are still being held, with various representatives of the President's long range planning committee.

However, in order to call campus and community attention to the proposed reallocation plan, and the possible programmatic ramifications if implemented, a decision was made by the Department to take a bold risk. Letters of non-renewal of contracts for two special instructors in dance were sent indicating that due to the University's proposed budget reduction in PHER, their re-employment for the 1982-83 year could not be guaranteed. Loss of the instructors would result in elimination of the dance program. This action immediately put into motion a chain reaction of events. Threatened with elimination, the University administration was bombarded with a variety of students, faculty and community pressures to reinstate the dance program. Reactions ranged from letters of support and newspaper editorials to television coverage. Heavily pressured to respond, the ultimate confrontation between the University administration and hundreds of students led to the University's commitment to maintain the dance program.

This confrontation, built upon a flare of public relations and political overtones, was unquestionably a major risk. But it was a risk that had to be taken. Fortunately, the University commitment to maintain the program clearly illustrated that despite severe financial restraints, the needs and interests of students cannot be taken lightly. The results of the confrontation clearly indicate that if there is demand for a program, if the quality is there and if commitments from students and faculty are there, sufficient pressure can be applied to maintain programs.

The Change

Accompanying the reactionary steps taken by the Department in dealing with the proposed curtailment, was the realization and acceptance of the necessity for change to meet the challenges of the 1980's. Prior to the rebalancing plan, the Department, like most departments across the country, was heavily

committed toward emphasis on undergraduate teacher preparation. During the late 1970's, the Department had implemented professional training programs in non-teaching settings, but commitment toward this area was relatively modest. Faced with the ultimate threat of curtailment, the Department not only defended its position on campus, but additionally took the offense and proceeded to actually encourage change. Through carefully thought out planning and deliberation, the Department, along with other Departments in the College of Human Science and Services, developed a five year staffing plan which called for program change and faculty shifts within the College. New departmental mission statements were developed and recommendations for program change were presented to the University for review and discussion.

The plan essentially called for major university investments in programs relating specifically to community based physical education, health, exercise science, recreational management and gerontology among others. In turn, the department would maintain programs at their current level in dance, athletic training, and programs for the handicapped. Over the next few years, the Department recommended modest reductions in the undergradaute teacher preparation curriculum and a reduction in the involvement of full time faculty in the basic service program.

When presented, the University appeared to respond favorably toward the plan and have conceptually agreed to support the change. In fact, it is becoming clearly evident than the University has labeled the area of health and exercise science as potentially central to its reinvestment plan.

The above programmatic changes will result in changes in faculty/staffing patterns over the next few years (sans retrenchment). As vacancies occur through normal attritition and some type of yet announced early retirement program, shifts will occur to reflect changes in Departmental curricula.

Also accompanying the recommended five year staffing plan, was a renewed Departmental commitment to finding a place within the University reinvestment plans for resources in advanced technology. Within six months from the date of the rebalancing plan announcement, the Department submitted two major research equipment proposals. One proposal, submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs requested approximately $60,000 of high technology equipment for a computer-integrated system in the Department's Human Performance Laboratory. The second proposal requesting approximately $260,000 for similar advanced technology instrumentation received University endorsement and has been forwarded to the Department of Defense. Both proposals are currently under consideration. Even if unsuccessful, submission of the proposals appears to give clear indications at least that the University recognizes the potential role that the Department might play in the era of advanced telecommunications.

Although the above changes appear momentarily painful to some of us, many of the Department faculty are convinced that these changes are absolutely necessary. The 1980's and 90's present a major shift in societal values. Whether we like it or not, programs in HPER must face up to the realities of the time. There will always be a need for highly trained health educators, physical educators, and recreational experts. It is imperative however, that we train our students for the jobs of the future. It is equally imperative that we also train our students to cope with the era of advanced technology.

Additional Suggestions

Having faced and lived through a major threat for survival, several do's and don'ts have become clearly evident and are offered as hints. For those Departments experiencing similar threats, the following are offered as suggestions:

1) If faced with potential reductions, cutbacks or eliminations, don't point fingers at any other departments or programs. One of the things

we attempted to do was to deal specifically with our own program and the circumstances surrounding it. It would have been very easy for us to recommend elimination of this program or that program and attempt to place the problem somewhere else. This approach will not work. Forget about what others are doing and concentrate on your own program. Recognize that the problem is real and defend on your own merits.

2) Do rely upon others to help you out. One of the major strengths in the Department's response at URI was the consolidation of efforts among all departments within the College of Human Science and Services. Although responding as a Department, we developed college plans and worked collectively as a team, thereby avoiding internecine feuds which are very possible.

3) Play up the positive. Accentuate what you do best. Take the initiative and avoid being on the defensive. This point cannot be overstated. On the otherhand, recognize your weaknesses and be willing and ready to deal with them. Recognize that compromise is an effective way to solve a problem.

4) Don't assume that everybody knows what you are doing. In fact, don't assume anything. There is no substitute for repetition and redundancy. Points have to be stated over and over and over. Reports and position statements need to be stated continually. Don't forget that many of your critics will probably not want to hear what you have to say. The budget cutters may understand everything you are saying but are very adept at not listening to things they really do not want to hear.

5) Recognize that during a crisis situation, the time is ripe for change - often to your benefit. Don't hesitate to go for all the marbles. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

6) Above all, don't get discouraged. In this ever changing society, nothing is permanent and very little is predictable. Hang in there.

REFERENCES

1 "Public Colleges in Michigan and Ohio Troubled by Further Efforts to Reduce State Spending," The Chronicle of Higher Education, XXIV:6, April 7, 1982.

2 "Idaho Colleges and Universities Declare Exigency: Teachers Face Layoffs," The Chronicle of Higher Education, XXIV:19, July 7, 1982.

3 "University of Louisville Cuts Thirty-seven Faculty Positions," The Chronicle of Higher Education, XXIV:21, July 21, 1982.

4 "Further Cuts Ordered in Oregon, Washington," The Chronicle of Higher Education, XXIV:21, July 21, 1982.

5 "One Hundred Layoffs Planned at Idaho Colleges," The Chronicle of Higher Education, XXIV:22, July 28, 1982.

6 "University of Washington Plans to Drop Twenty-four Degree Programs," The Chronicle of Higher Education, XXIV:11, November 10, 1982.

7 "Missouri Campus Bitterly Divided Over How to Reallocate Funds," The Chronicle of Higher Education, XXIV:12, May 19, 1982.

8 "Major Cuts Proposed by URI Panel," Providence Journal Bulletin, December 21, 1981.

9 "California Pushing Research in Microelectronics," The Chronicle of Higher Education, XXIV:6, April 7, 1982.

10 "Computer Literacy Gaining Place in Undergraduate Curriculum," The Chronicle of Higher Education, XXIV:8, April 21, 1982.

11 Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. Washington: US Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1979.

12 Promoting Health/Preventing Disease: Objectives for the Nation. Washington: US Department of Health and Human Services, December 1981.

13 Rhode Island State Health Systems Plan 1980. Providence: RI State Department of Health, 1980.